

street Arabs are markedly quick-witted. Imitation governs imperiously the behaviour of children and urges the young to acquire in a few years the habits which represent long centuries of endeavour on the part of their ancestors. Memorizing apart, the process of education is in fact a course of imitation : we carry out an instruction by imitating in action the impressions that we have acquired from it. In adult life imitative activity is strongly bridled by the force of habit. But it remains the chief stimulus to reform—the force which leads men from time to time to alter their ideas and behaviour. We owe to it, not only the transmission of our culture from generation to generation, but the halting steps by which we have followed the lamp-bearers of progress.

A habit may be acquired by an original exercise of will, but in the vast majority of cases it is established by mimicking others. Imitation may then, generally be described as the origin of habit. But a habit tends to become stronger than the impulse to imitate : it checks us from imitating things that are novel, it represents, in fact, the conservative propensity which is so strong in man's—and especially in woman's—nature. The history of mankind, considered in its broadest aspect, may be figured as a conflict between imitation and habit. Since the beginning of time men of original, or, eccentric, disposition

have been
offering to their fellow-men novelties for
adoption.
Their ideas have generally been
rejected. Habit
has been too strong to admit of a
reform. unless
there have been circumstances to
reinforce the
impulse to imitate.
Amongst these reinforcing
circumstances is
the frequency of the impressions we
receive.
We rapidly pick up the accents or
mannerisms